

Talking points
Leland Speed/Gray Swoope Announcement
Tuesday, November 21, 2006

I learned early on that rarely does anything good in economic development happen by chance.

At the state level, the mission of economic development takes perseverance and commitment, and a comprehensive, meaningful program guided by steady hands.

For the past three years, the people of Mississippi have had the benefit of such characteristics with the outstanding public service rendered by the two people who are up here with me today.

Under the perseverance and commitment of Leland Speed as executive director and Gray Swoope as chief operating officer, the Mississippi Development Authority is better and more efficient today than it was three years ago.

We've re-tooled Mississippi's essential economic development program, replacing the old one-size-fits-all approach with a modern, more flexible

plan for recruiting higher-paying, higher-skilled jobs in the fastest growing sectors of the economy.

We call it “Momentum Mississippi.”

In the old days Mississippi was prone to go after companies looking for strong backs and cheap labor. Today, in a new era of economic development, the emphasis is on strong minds and higher pay for jobs that require higher skills.

With revamped workforce training and development programs, Momentum Mississippi has helped Mississippi grow and positioned the state for even more growth as we attract new jobs and help existing business expand.

A lot of people deserve a lot of credit for our successes, but no two people deserve more credit than Leland Speed and Gray Swoope.

Today, I am announcing that Leland Speed is returning to the private sector after heading up MDA for the past three years. At the same time, I am

delighted to announce that Gray Swoope, MDA's chief operating officer, will take Leland's place as executive director.

This is a seamless transition because Gray has been the man behind the details of all of the important initiatives undertaken by MDA since the beginning of my Administration.

He is thoroughly immersed in all aspects of Mississippi's economic development program and initiatives, and I am delighted to say that with his elevation to the top spot we won't miss a beat."

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When Leland took the job he told me he'd stay two years and I want to thank him for going the extra mile by staying for three.

And, when Leland Speed took this job he told me he'd work for a dollar a year. I remember thinking at the time how generous a gesture that really was, for a very successful businessman to come from private business to a state agency.

Leland, as you well know, it's customary in private business to reward a job well done with some kind of bonus.

So, today, in recognition of your outstanding public service, and in the spirit of private enterprise, I've approved a 100 percent bonus for you and am pleased to present you with this check in the amount of three dollars.

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Gray, some folks probably wish I could give you a blank check to help create new and higher paying jobs in Mississippi, and you'd probably like to have one.

But the fact is there are no blank checks.

I only ask that you keep doing the outstanding kind of job you've done. Do that and MDA and its important economic development mission for the people of Mississippi will stay in good hands.

(Call on Leland for remarks)

(Call on Gray for remarks)

(Q&A)

